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ABSTRACT

A survey of the status of language usage in Ghana begins with an overview of the distribution and usage of English, as the sole official language, and of the local languages Akan, Ewe, Adangme, Dagbani, Nzema, Ga, Dagaari, and Hausa. A matrix follows that rates these languages on: (1) their usage rating using State Department classifications; (2) increase and decrease trends by the year 2000; (3) chief of state use in addressing the populace; (4) use in armed forces, government, court, and diplomatic communications, written and oral; (5) use as a language of instruction or required language in higher education, on the secondary and elementary levels, and in adult education; (6) use in the popular press, radio and television broadcasting, and film; (7) business and professional use, written and oral; (8) use in intellectual circles; (9) the alphabet situation; (10) the status of indigenous literature; (11) use in public signs and notices; and (12) the availability of instructional materials and dictionaries in the native languages for use in English as a second language teaching. Explanatory notes give the number and population percentages using the languages, the type of alphabet used, and specific instructional materials titles. A selected bibliography is also included. (MSE)

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Language/Area Reference Center

COUNTRY STATUS REPORT:

GHANA

(Revision)

Prepared by:

Margaret McFerren

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Country Status Reports (CSRs) are produced by the Language/Area Reference Center, Center for Applied Linguistics, as deliverables in a contract between the Center for Applied Linguistics and the member agencies of the Interagency Language Roundtable.

Each report consists of 1) a one-page Overview, describing the language situation in the country under study; 2) a Language Use Matrix, describing in detail the use of languages in different areas of the country's society; 3) Footnotes amplifying some of the matrix figures; 4) a Selected Bibliography of books and articles on the use of language in the country under study; and 5) Explanation of the matrix figures.

More detailed information on the countries is kept at the Center for Applied Linguistics. Further information on any aspect of the CSRs can be obtained by contacting the Center.

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Center for Applied Linguistics/LARC
Country Status Reports
December, 1984
Ghana - 1, Overview

A practical necessity, English is the sole official language in Ghana, where many different languages are spoken, but where no one linguistic group is numerically dominant. The Ghanaian languages with the largest numbers of speakers are Akan, Ewe, Adangme, Dagbani, Nzema, Ga, and Dagaari, yet they range in number from only 39% to 3% of the population first to last, and many are further subdivided into several dialects. Hausa, although not native to Ghana, emerged as a lingua franca in the north and is now said to have spread throughout the country in this capacity. While the population percentage speaking English is quite low, Pidgin English is spoken or understood by nearly all.

In spite of the countless revolutions which have occurred in Ghana since independence from British rule in 1957, British systems remain intact in the government bureaucracy (in spite of military rule), in the courts and in the educational system, and are accompanied by the wholesale use of English for all official purposes, written or oral. The administration, for example, functions entirely via English. In the courts, all proceedings are in English with simultaneous interpretation for the non-English-speaking defendant by a court interpreter. In spite of the fact that magistrates and lawyers often have to restate themselves in the defendant's language because of the inaccuracy of the court interpreter, all statements are first made in English. The general principle regarding official language use in Ghana has been that what is not stated or written in English is considered neither official nor legitimate.

In the military, staffed largely by northerners, English is used for all written proceedings, and on all levels in oral communications, notably for military drill, Hausa, not English, however, is the real lingua franca in the military, and is used on all levels, due not only to the prominence of Hausa in the north, but also to the high number of illiterate recruits. Ewe, Dagbani, and Dagaari are known to be spoken among NCOs and enlisted troops.

The most recent restructuring of Ghana's educational system which took place in the mid-1970's, reintroduced a policy followed from 1925-58, in which Ghanaian languages are the media of instruction in primary schools in the areas where these languages are native. The principal languages used are Akan, Ewe, Adangme, Dagbani, Nzema, Ga and Dagaari. They are used as media of instruction at least in the first three years, and sometimes in the fourth through sixth years where materials are available; otherwise, English becomes the medium of instruction from the fourth year, and the local language is taught as a subject. English is the medium of instruction in secondary school, where Akan, Ewe and Ga are taught as subjects. Higher education is entirely English-medium, unless one specializes in Ghanaian languages; however,very few have chosen this specialty to date.

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) transmits news bulletins and special programs in Akan, Ewe, Dagbani, Nzema, Ga and Hausa daily. Television programming, also a service of GBC, makes programs available mainly in Akan, Ewe, Ga and Dagbani, yet there is at least one popular comedy in Pidgin English.

In Ghana, where the British legacy is not despised and the continued use of English is not a political liability, very little has been done to bring local languages into official processes. Akan, the language with the largest number of native speakers and spoken as a second language by many non-Akans, has been proposed as the official language, but not generally approved. English remains the symbol of social mobility and prestige in Ghana, especially in the urban areas, and its status is unlikely to change in the future.

GHANA

Languages

Factoids	English	Akan	Ewe	Adangme	Dagbani	Nzema	Ga	Dagaari	Hausa
1. Usage rating*	2	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	-
2. Increase/decrease	-	1	3	2	1	3	2	3	-
3. Chief of State use?	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
4. Armed Forces/written	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Armed Forces/oral	1	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	1
6. Government/written	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Government/oral, national	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Government/oral, local	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
9. Court/written	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Court/oral	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
11. Diplomatic use?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Higher education	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Higher ed: required?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Secondary education	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15. Secondary: required?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
16. Primary education	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
17. Primary: required?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
18. Adult education	1	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	0
19. Popular press use	1	2	2	0	2	2	2	0	0
20. Transmission across borders?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
21. Use in radio broadcasting	2	2	2	0	2	2	2	3	2
22. Use in TV broadcasting	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	3	0
23. Use in film	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
24. Business/professional/written	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25. Business/professional/oral	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
26. Use in intellectual circles	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27. Alphabet situation*	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
28. Status of literature	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
29. Use in signs?	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30. Teaching materials*	-	2	2	0	2	0	2	0	2
31. Bilingual dictionaries*	-	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2

Notes:

Numbers are explained on following pages

? = information unavailable within time frame of project

- = not applicable

1. 1984 ESTIMATES, NUMBERS OF NATIVE SPEAKERS

Language	No. of Native Speakers	Percentage of Population
English	-	-
Akan	5,620,000	39.3%
Ewe	1,702,000	11.9%
Adangme	586,000	4.1%
Dagbani	560,000	3.9%
Nzema	530,000	3.7%
Ga	500,000	3.5%
Dagaari	420,000	2.9%
Hausa	-	-

(Hausa is an important lingua franca spoken by approximately 60% of the population of Ghana.)

27. TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

Language	Alphabet
Akan	Roman
Ewe	Roman
Adangme	Roman
Dagbani	Roman
Nzema	Roman
Ga	Roman
Dagaari	Roman
Hausa	Roman

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Language	Texts
Akan	Berry, Jack and Agnes Akosua Aidoo. An Introduction to Akan. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, Program of Oriental and African Languages, 1975.
	Christaller, Johann G. A Grammar of Asante and Fante Language, called Tsi (Chee, Twi): Based on the Akuapem Dialect, with Reference to the Other (Akan and Fante) Dialects. Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1964.
Ewe	Ansre, Gilbert. Conversational Ewe. Prelim. ed. Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana, 1968.

30. TEACHING MATERIALS FOR THE ENGLISH SPEAKER, cont.

Language	Texts
Ewe	Warburton, Irene P. Ewe Basic Course. Bloomington, IN: African Studies Program, Indiana University, 1968.
	Seshie, herman and A. Crakye Denteh. Spoken Ewe for Non-Ewe Beginners. Accra-North: Pointer, Ltd., 1974.
Dagbani	Al-Hassan, Abudullai and A. Crakye Denteh. Spoken Dagbani for Non-Dagbani Beginners. Accra, Ghana: Pointer Ltd., 1975.
	Language Guide (Dagbani Version). 2nd rev. ed. Accra, Ghana: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1968.
Ga	Berry, Jack and Nii Amon Kotei. An Introductory Course in Ga. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1969.
	Ablorth-Odjidja. Ga for Beginners. Accra, Ghana: Waterville Publishing House, 1968.
Hausa	Kraft, Charles H. and Marguerite E. Kraft. Introductory Hausa. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1975.
	Cowan, J. Ronayne and Russell G. Shuh. Spoken Hausa. Ithaca, NY: Spoken Language Services, 1975.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR THE ENGLISH SPEAKER

Language	Texts
Akan	Berry, Jack. English, Twi, Asante, Fante Dictionary. London: Macmillan. Index to the following dictionary.
	Christaller, Johann G.. Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language, called Tshi (Twi). 2nd rev. ed. Basel, Switzerland: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933.
Ga	Kropp, Dakubu, M.E. Ga-English Dictionary. Legon, Ghana: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, 1973.

31. DICTIONARIES FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS, cont.

Language	Texts
Hausa	Newman, Paul and Roxanna Ma Newman, comps. Modern Hausa-English Dictionary. Ibadan and Zaria, Nigeria: Oxford University Press, 1979.
	Abraham, Roy Clive. Dictionary of the Hausa Language. 2nd ed. London: University of London Press, 1977.

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George, Betty Grace Stein. Education in Ghana. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1976.

Ghana. Ministry of Education. The New Structure and Content of Education in Ghana. Accra, Ghana, 1974.

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Landman, Ruth. "Language Policies and Their Implications for Ethnic Relations in The Newly Sovereign States of Sub-Saharan Africa," in Brian M. du Toit (ed.), Ethnicity in Modern Africa. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978.

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Kugblenu, John. Broadcasting in Ghana. Accra, Ghana: Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, 1978.

Minta, Ousmane. "Language Policy and Literacy Development: A Study of The Two West African Countries of Ghana and Mali," Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1980.

Okeke, Barbara. 4 June: A Revolution Betrayed. Enugu, Nigeria: Ikenga Publishers, 1982.

Patten, Margaret D. Ghanaian Imaginative Writing in English, 1950-1969. Legon, Ghana: University of Ghana Bookshop, 1971.

Language Use Matrix
Center for Applied Linguistics
April 1984
Numerical Scales - 1

1. Usage rating, using the State Department classifications
   1: Official language, most widely used.
   2: Official language, not most widely used.
   3: Widely used language, but not official. (Over 10% of population)
   4: Unofficial language used by significant minority (but less than 3)
   5: Unofficial language used by influential minority
   FOOTNOTE: NUMBERS OF SPEAKERS, PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

2. Increase/decrease trends by the year 2000
   1: Number of native speakers will increase in proportion
   2: Number of native speakers will remain proportionally constant
   3: Number of native speakers will decrease in proportion

3. Chief of State use, in addressing populace: YES (1) NO (0)

4. Armed Forces written communications
   1: Only language used in official communiques
   2: One of the languages used in official communiques
   0: Not used in official communiques

5. Armed Forces oral communications
   1: Used on all levels
   2: Used among officers only
   3: Used among multi-lingual NCO's and troops
   4: Used among monolingual troops only
   0: Not used

6. Written government communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used in official communications

7. Oral government communications/national level
   1: Official language spoken in national assembly
   2: One of the official languages spoken in national assembly
   0: Not used in government

8. Oral government communications/local level
   1: Official language in local government
   2: One of the official languages used in local government
   3: Allowed in local government proceedings, translated into official language
   0: Not used in local government

9. Court use in written communications
   1: Only language used in official communications
   2: One of the languages used in official communications
   0: Not used

Language Use Matrix
Center for Applied Linguistics
April 1984
Numerical Scales - 2

10. Court use in oral communications
    1: Only official language used in court
    2: One of the official languages used in court
    3: Allowed in courts, translated into official language(s)
    0: Not used in courts

11. Diplomatic use in notes to other countries: YES (1) NO (0)

12. Use in higher education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used

13. Language taught as subject in required courses in higher education:
    YES (1) NO (0)

14. Use in secondary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

15. Language taught as subject in required courses on secondary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

16. Use in primary education
    1: Official medium of instruction
    2: Unofficial medium of instruction
    0: Not used as medium of instruction

17. Language taught as subject in required courses on primary level?
    YES (1) NO (0)

18. Language use in adult education
    1: Used in oral and written technical instruction
    2: Used in oral and written life skills instruction
    3: Used in oral life skills instruction
    4: Used in literacy classes only
    0: Not used in adult informal education

19. Language use in popular press
    1: Used in publications throughout country
    2: Used in centrally-based publications with national distribution
    3: Used only in regional and local publications
    4: Used in clandestine publications only
    0: Not used

Language Use Matrix
Center for Applied Linguistics
April 1984
Numerical Scales - 3

20. Language used in radio/TV transmission across national borders?
YES (1) NO (0)

21. Language use in radio broadcasting
1: Language used broadcasting thoughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national broadcasts
3: Language used in local broadcasting only
3: Language used in clandestine broadcasting only
0: Language not used in radio broadcasting

22. Language use in TV broadcasting
1: Language used in telecasting throughout country
2: Language used in centrally-based national telecasting
3: Language used regional and local telecasting only
0: Language not used in TV

23. Language use in film
1: Language used in indigenous film-making
2: Foreign-language films dubbed/subtitled into language
0: Language not used in films

24. Business/Professional use - written
1: Sole official language in business and professional communications
2: One of the official languages in business and professional communication
0: Not used

25. Business/Professional use - oral
1: Used in trade and commerce throughout country
2: Used in national trade and commerce only
3: Used only in local trade and commerce

26. Language use in intellectual circles
1: Language used in indigenous scholarly publications
2: Language used in formal scholarly discussion
0: Language not used

27. Alphabet situation
1: Established standardized alphabet exists.
2: Alphabet developed, no standardization
3: Competing alphabets exist
0: No alphabet exists
FOOTNOTE: TYPE OF ALPHABET USED

28. Status of indigenous literature
1: Established written tradition exists
2: Literature tradition emerging
3: Popular literature exists
0: No written literature exists

29. Language used in official public signs, notices: YES (1) NO (0)

Language Use Matrix
Center for Applied Linguistics
April 1984
Numerical Scales - 4

30. Teaching materials for English speakers
    1: Wide range of teaching materials exists
    2: Narrow range of teaching materials exists
    0: No teaching materials exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

31. Dictionaries for English speakers
    1: Wide range of bilingual dictionaries exists
    2: Narrow range of dictionaries exists
    0: No dictionaries exist
    FOOTNOTE: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY